



Dionysus Theatre

AWARD-WINNING TOURING THEATRE FROM SUSSEX

EDUCATION PACK / KS3-KS4 ENGLISH AND DRAMA

A Christmas Carol

by Candlelight

A teacher-facing resource for exploring Dickens' text, its social world and the choices that turn a classic novella into live theatre.

CONTEXT / CHARACTER / THEMES / PAGE TO STAGE
BEFORE AND AFTER THE SHOW / GCSE-STYLE PROMPTS

FREE EDUCATION RESOURCE / 2026

Welcome to the pack

This pack is designed primarily for KS3 and KS4 English and Drama. Teachers can use individual activities as short starters, combine them into a lesson, or build a sequence around a visit to A Christmas Carol by Candlelight.

ENGLISH

Analyse character, theme, structure and context. Develop evidence-led interpretations and purposeful review writing.

DRAMA

Explore ensemble storytelling, status, physicality, sound, design and the practical process of adaptation.

CROSS-CURRICULAR

Connect the novella to Victorian society, poverty, work, charity and changing Christmas traditions.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Understand key social and historical contexts surrounding the 1843 novella.
- 2 Trace Scrooge's journey and connect character choices to Dickens' themes.
- 3 Evaluate how performance and design choices shape an audience's response.
- 4 Create, rehearse and reflect on original practical work.
- 5 Write with clear reference to text, performance and dramatic effect.

Teacher note: The pack avoids assuming that students have seen the production. Activities marked BEFORE can prepare a class for attendance; activities marked AFTER help students analyse a performance they have experienced.

Dickens and 1843

A Christmas Carol was published in December 1843. Dickens wrapped urgent questions about poverty, responsibility and human dignity inside a fast-moving ghost story that could reach a wide readership.

INDUSTRIAL BRITAIN

Rapid urban growth created wealth but also overcrowding, insecure work and severe hardship. Dickens asks what those with comfort owe to those without it.

THE POOR LAW

The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act expanded the workhouse system. Conditions were intentionally harsh, reflecting the belief that assistance should deter dependence.

CHILDREN AND LABOUR

Dickens had experienced childhood labour himself. The Cratchit children and Ignorance and Want make social neglect personal rather than abstract.

A CHANGING CHRISTMAS

The period helped shape modern ideas of Christmas as a time for family, generosity and shared celebration. Dickens uses these values as a test of Scrooge's humanity.

DISCUSS

Scrooge repeats the language of institutions: prisons, workhouses and the 'surplus population'. Why might Dickens give these ideas to a single, memorable character? How does the supernatural story allow him to challenge them?

A journey in five staves

Dickens calls the sections of the novella 'staves', as if the story were a piece of music. Each visitation changes the emotional rhythm and forces Scrooge to see himself from a new angle.

1	Marley's Ghost	ISOLATION	A warning breaks Scrooge's certainty.
2	Christmas Past	MEMORY	Childhood, love and lost possibilities return.
3	Christmas Present	CONNECTION	Scrooge sees joy and hardship beyond himself.
4	Yet to Come	CONSEQUENCE	Silence and fear reveal where his choices lead.
5	The End of It	REDEMPTION	Insight becomes action, generosity and belonging.

Quick task: Draw Scrooge's emotional journey as a line graph across the five staves. Label the turning points. Then choose one moment where an actor's physicality, voice or stillness could make that change visible.

Themes that move

REDEMPTION

Scrooge is not simply punished; he is offered the chance to change. What makes the final transformation convincing?

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The story moves from private wealth to public duty. Which encounters turn suffering into something Scrooge can no longer ignore?

MEMORY AND IDENTITY

The past does not excuse Scrooge, but it helps explain him. How does memory create both pain and possibility?

FAMILY AND BELONGING

The Cratchits possess little money but create abundance through care. How does Dickens contrast their home with Scrooge's rooms?

FEAR AND HOPE

Ghost-story conventions produce suspense, but the destination is hopeful. How do darkness and warmth work together?

TIME

One night contains a lifetime. The structure compresses past, present and future so that choice feels urgent.

Choose and connect: Select two themes. Find one event, one character relationship and one staging idea that links them. Explain the effect you want the audience to experience.

From page to stage

Dionysus reimagines the story as an intimate ensemble event with live music, winter shadows and candlelight. The production is designed to retain its theatrical impact in theatres, churches, halls and heritage spaces.

ENSEMBLE DOUBLING

Nine performers create many characters. A change of posture, rhythm, voice or costume detail must establish each new identity quickly.

LIVE MUSICAL WORLD

Music can carry atmosphere, punctuate a transition and bind separate scenes into one shared rhythm.

LIGHT AND SHADOW

Candlelight suggests warmth, ritual and vulnerability. Darkness allows the audience's imagination to complete what it cannot fully see.

AUDIENCE PROXIMITY

In an intimate space, small choices register. A glance or held breath can have the force of a large scenic effect.

DIRECTOR'S TABLE

- Which moments need spectacle, and which need restraint?
- How can one object acquire different meanings across the story?
- When should the ensemble be visible as storytellers?
- How could a venue's architecture become part of the design?

Practical classroom work

BEFORE

1

One room, three times

Stage the same part of Scrooge's room as past, present and future. Change only bodies, sound and one prop.

2

Sound map

Build a 60-second soundscape moving from London commerce to Scrooge's isolation and then to supernatural interruption.

3

Status walk

Explore Scrooge, Bob, Fred and a charity collector through pace, eye line, spatial ownership and response to others.

AFTER

1. Performance detective

Identify one acting, lighting, sound and design choice. For each, describe the choice, its moment and its effect.

2. Hot seating

Interview Scrooge at three points: before Marley, after Christmas Present and on Christmas morning.

3. Adaptation review

Choose one change from page to stage. Argue whether it clarified, complicated or transformed Dickens' idea.

Writing and assessment

Strong responses move beyond description. They identify a choice, use precise evidence, explain its effect and connect that effect to character, theme, context or the production's wider interpretation.

A USEFUL PARAGRAPH SHAPE

Choice: What did the writer, performer or creative team do?

Evidence: Which word, action, image, sound or stage moment supports your point?

Effect: How did it shape meaning or audience response?

Connection: What does it reveal about character, theme, context or interpretation?

DISCUSSION AND ESSAY PROMPTS

- 1 How does Dickens present redemption as both personal and social?
- 2 How does the supernatural expose realities that Scrooge has chosen not to see?
- 3 Compare the dramatic functions of Christmas Past and Christmas Yet to Come.
- 4 How can an ensemble make a large fictional world feel immediate in a small space?
- 5 Evaluate how light, sound or music shaped one important transition.
- 6 To what extent does fear, rather than kindness, cause Scrooge to change?

Review challenge: Write 350-500 words for an audience that has not seen the production. Include a clear judgement, specific performance evidence and one thoughtful comparison with Dickens' novella.

Continue the conversation

Bring bold, intimate storytelling into your students' experience.

We welcome conversations with schools interested in attending the production, exploring educational engagement or discussing a visit that connects with English and Drama learning.

SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION ENQUIRIES

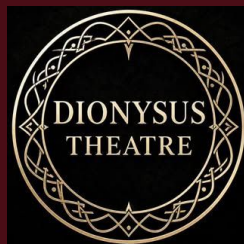
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Dionysus Theatre

BOLD STORIES. BEAUTIFULLY TOLD.